spreading the seeds for a sustainable future

The International Model Forest Network

A Chilean Perspective

During the development of the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement, I became aware of some remarkable Canadian achievements. Notable among those were Canada's Model Forests and the work of the International Model Forest Network (IMFN).

I discovered that Model Forests had moved far beyond the experimental stage and were introducing sustainable management practices in populated forest regions with full participation of local communities. This was very attractive to Chile. With the assistance of the IMFN Secretariat, the Chiloé Model Forest was launched in 1997. It has proven to be a great success from a community development and environmental perspective. Chile's second Model Forest will come on-stream next year.

This document summarizes the story of Model Forests since their inception in 1992. It describes the principles, how they are organized, how they operate, and how they have evolved into an active international Model Forests network. It also sets out a vision of what Model Forests could achieve over the next 10 years and how, given the necessary financial and political backing, the IMFN could make a significant contribution to the global environment and the well-being of forest-based communities worldwide.

I believe that Model Forests offer a viable, low-cost approach to pursue sustainable development and at the same time protect the environment. The concept holds enormous potential for addressing some of the most pressing concerns facing developing nations in the immediate future.

JUAN CARLOS COLLARTE
Chairman
IMFN Task Force

From Canadian seeds....

The International Model Forest Network (IMFN) grew out of the Canadian Model Forest Program. The IMFN has been working internationally to develop Model Forests and to link them in a network. Funding for the IMFN has been provided by the Canadian Forest Service, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the International Development Research Centre.

Model Forests have proven to be successful in a wide range of geographic and cultural settings. Their universal appeal has resulted, to date, in establishing Model Forests in six nations. The network continues to grow: five more countries have Model Forests ready to launch, while 10 more are actively exploring the concept.

The July 2000 meeting of the G-8 Foreign Ministers in Japan acknowledged the IMFN's contribution to support global sustainable forest management.

Support for this growth has included significant contributions from Mexico, Russia, the United States, Japan, the FAO, Chile, and many others.

... a growing international movement

Table of Contents

CIDA Photo: David Trattles

Why Model Forests?

The Model Forest concept was developed in Canada to pursue the goals of sustainable development. It aims to promote cooperation and collaboration to advance management, conservation, and sustainable development of forest resources. Because forests and people cannot be separated, people are at the heart of the concept. They are the key factor in the search to define sustainability at the field level where Model Forests are rooted.

With 10% of the world's forested land, Canada acknowledged a special responsibility, both to its citizens and to the world at large, to manage its forests sustainably. In the early 1990s, the idea for what is now known as Canada's Model Forest Program began to take shape. The goal was sustainable development. However, it was recognized that the route to sustainability must be charted by those who know and use the forest – the people who live, work and play in the forest, who study the forest flora and fauna, and who work to protect old growth and wildlife.

With people at the heart of the concept, the Canadian Forest Service promoted the idea of Model Forests and forming partnerships to provide a neutral forum or roundtable where individual interests would be respected, and where a desire to experiment with new ideas under a common goal of sustainable forest management would occur.

Who has a stake in the world's forests?

We all do. Forested areas of the world are home to more than 500 million people and generate more than US $400 billion in economic activity each year. They provide the livelihood for 150 million indigenous people and support millions of jobs in the developed world. But that's only a small part of the picture. In a very real sense, forests are the cradle of life on earth. In the tropical regions alone, forests nurture some 13 million distinct plant and animal species. What's more, forests are the largest single land buffer against the greenhouse gasses that cause global warming. Only the oceans rival the forests as a life-supporting mechanism for the planet.

By absorbing water and regulating run-off, forests keep topsoil in place, and prevent rivers and streams from silting up, which is a major cause of flooding. In hilly and mountainous terrain, tree cover stabilizes the soil, preventing landslides that can follow heavy rains.

Forests are also nature's tool for managing watersheds through their wet and dry seasons, and maintaining sufficient water supplies for drinking, irrigation, transportation, and other human uses. Where too little water is the problem, forests also play a vital role, forming a sand-proof fence, protecting communities and farm land from encroaching deserts in the arid parts of Africa and Asia.

Taming rivers

In 1998, after three months of torrential rains, floods on the Yangtze river claimed 3 650 lives and caused more than US $30 billion in damage.

Chinese officials acknowledge that deforestation and poor logging practices led to erosion of the river's banks and silt accumulation, and were major factors behind this disaster.

Prior to 1950, the Yangtze flooded on average every six years. By the 1980s, there was a large flood every two years – an alarming trend that continued through the 1990s.

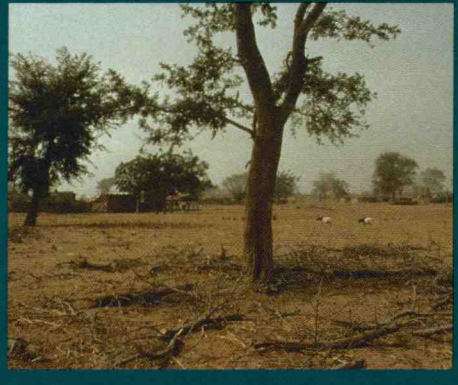
Source: China Review

CIDA Photo: David Trattles

Protecting People

In Honduras, deforestation contributed to the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Barren hillsides were washed away when two meters of water fell in a week. The loss of tree cover increased the extent and ferocity of landslides and flooding, which killed tens of thousands and left many more homeless.

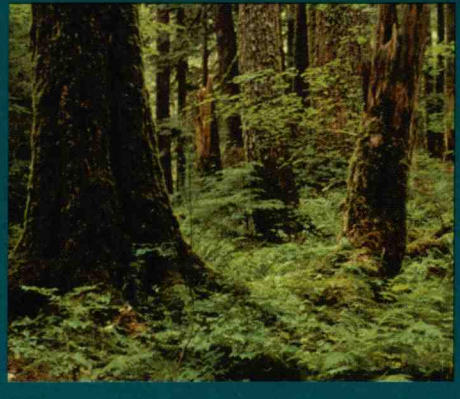


Protecting farm land

In sub-Saharan Africa, slashing and burning forest and bushland to make room for agriculture, also opens the door to desertification.

Deforestation of marginal lands is linked to desertification because it removes the root systems that slow topsoil erosion, and because it removes a natural barrier to wind erosion.

Each year, the country of Niger gives up 2 500 square kilometres of productive land to the advancing Sahara.



Cooling the planet

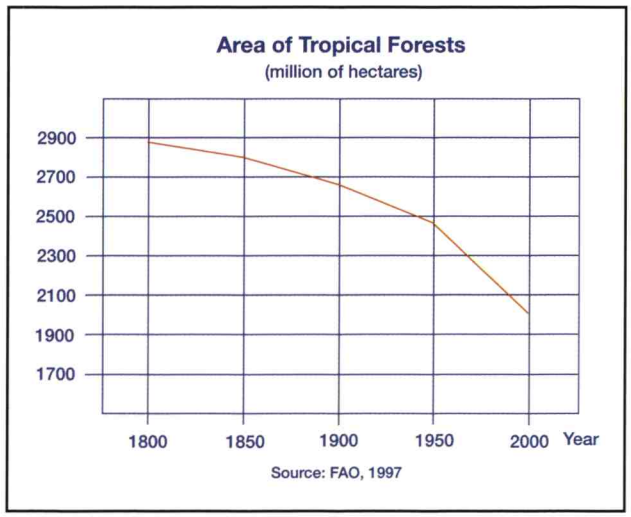
Burning fossil fuels pumps 22 billion tones of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year, adding to the greenhouse effect.

Because a growing tree stores half its dry weight in the form of carbon, forests absorb carbon dioxide and help to keep the planet cool.

Why are our forests under pressure?

As the number of people on Earth grew six-fold over the last century, the demand for wood, paper, fuel, and other forest products exploded. Since 1900, the world's forest cover shrank by more than four million square kilometres. The current annual rate of loss of natural tropical forests amounts to about 0.8% or 14 million hectares. In contrast, temperate forests grew by a mere 0.1% in the 1980s and continue to increase at a very low rate.

A number of factors contribute to deforestation. Sprawling cities are partly to blame. Short-sighted logging practices also take their toll, while indiscriminate slash and burn practices may turn potentially productive forest into marginal farm and ranch land. In some cases, land speculators drive the process, often abetted by ill-conceived fiscal and development policies and inequitable forms of land tenure.



Since 1980, **forest lands the size of India, more than three million square kilometres, have disappeared** in the world. Today, the world is losing a city block of trees every second. If nothing is done, **more forest lands the size of Mexico will be gone in 15 years**.

Sustainable development and sustainable forest management, however, are about much more than deforestation or reforestation. They are about people, about maintaining and enhancing economic benefits, conserving soil and water resources, biodiversity, and forest health. These are areas where

much needs to be done in both temperate and tropical forests and in both developed and developing countries. This is where Model Forests can play a unique role in supporting collaboration and cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Adding up the cost

Squandering forest resources is a costly business. But just how much it costs is hard to say. What price should we put on the loss of animal and plant species due to habitat destruction? How should we estimate the economic loss from converting high-potential forests into marginal farm land, or the enormous social consequences from uprooting forest-based societies? What about the devastation and loss of life due to floods, landslides, desertification, and other negative effects of deforestation?

CIDA Photo: Greg Kinch

Finally, there is climate change. We are already witnessing its effect, but how do we account for the potentially catastrophic impacts that lie down the road? These questions have no ready answers. However, some things are certain: if forests continue to disappear at their current pace, the costs, measured locally and globally, will be incalculable. **Rich or poor, North or South, we all will pay an intolerable price.**

A sustainable alternative

Time is running out for the world's forests, but **we have not yet passed the point of no return**. We still have a chance to reverse the decline in our forest stock and get off the path leading to economic and ecological calamity. In the same way the so-called Green Revolution of the 1950s and 1960s mobilized agricultural science and methods to eclipse dire predictions of global starvation, we can act now to reconcile the social, economic, and physical needs of a growing population with the needs of our forests.

There is no law of nature or economics that says that forests must be an arena where conflicts result in a few short-term winners and many long-term losers. There are ways to manage forest resources that safeguard the economic, environmental, and social needs of current and future generations. After all, forests are a renewable resource. Solutions are possible and the tangible proof can be seen in the 21 Model Forests now operating around the world.

What is a Model Forest?

Model Forests are built on the principle that people should have a say in the management and use of forest resources. It is only through this process that sustainable development and sustainable forest management (SFM) can be achieved. Model Forests provide a process that helps the various stakeholders recognize the impact of their activities on the land base, develop a shared understanding of SFM, and learn what it means in real, operational terms. After this, the partners can commit to taking concrete steps, on their own and as a group, to move toward a SFM regime.

No two Model Forests are identical. For many, the top priority will be to use land and natural resources more productively through modern silviculture techniques and economic diversification. This means that fewer trees can support more people and can make sustainable harvests possible where slash and burn or unsustainable logging was once common practice.

Model Forests strive to harmonize economic and non-economic priorities and to focus, for example, on education, research, protecting biodiversity, or developing local indicators to monitor progress toward SFM goals within the Model Forest land base. While some partnerships may seek only to preserve the existing forest cover, others may wish to expand it through reforestation and afforestation projects. Priorities may vary enormously. However, the common thread running through all Model Forests is that the local partnership sets the priorities.

In much of the world, key land use and forest management decisions – timber extraction and other uses of the forest – are made in corporate or government boardrooms by people who live and work in cities. They may not understand the competing interests for use of the forest or appreciate the environmental impact or social consequences of their decisions. Worse still, they may not care. Over the short-term, the problems they create will belong to someone else.

"The Model Forest offers a unique approach to addressing the sustainable development challenges of this island (Chiloé), and the experience gained could lead to the application of new models for forest management in other regions of Chile."

José Antonio Prado D.
Former Director - Chilean National Forest and Parks Service, Chile

Model Forests change this picture by involving local people in landuse decisions through a working partnership. In a given region, partners may include private landowners, industries, farmers, community organizations, indigenous peoples, churches, environmentalists, colleges, universities, and governments. The role of governments is crucial because political will is required to make it work. As the guardians of public land or by virtue of their policy and regulatory responsibilities, they are important stakeholders. For Model Forests to succeed, those who have an interest in the land base must be actively involved. However, participation is voluntary and does not affect land tenure. Instead, partners sign on because they see viable alternatives to existing practices. The glue that holds a Model Forest together comes from a common vision of sustainable forest management and a shared belief that moving in this direction can meet everyone's needs.

The goals of the Model Forest concept may not be achievable in all countries. The essential ingredient to success is a supportive and enabling government with the political will that supports sustainability. One of the major proposals for action of the Inter-governmental Forum on Forests was to urge all countries to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate their own national forest programs. The countries that have developed national forestry programs, have demonstrated this political will. In these countries a strong framework exists within which the Model Forest concept can provide an excellent approach to anchor forest policy and institutional reform.

Through governance structures designed by the partners, a Model Forest organization develops and delivers a wide range of programs and activities. These address social, environmental, and economic issues consistent with the principles of SFM. The focus is practical and directed towards the field or operational level. **Model Forest partnerships are also very effective in identifying economic opportunities that are not based only on timber.** The development of these alternative activities expands the economic opportunities available to the community, helps conserve scarce forest resources, and provides alternative livelihoods.

Successful Model Forests involve six key attributes

- Partnership
- Commitment to sustainable forest management
- A land base large enough in size to incorporate the area's forest uses and values
- A range of activities reflecting the value of forest resources and addressing the needs of the community
- An organizational and governance structure in which partners with different values can work comfortably together
- Building and sharing a knowledge base with others across the worldwide network of Model Forests

What do Model Forests Do?

That depends upon the priorities identified by the partnership. Today, however, the world's 21 Model Forests are involved in a wide range of activities such as:

- conserving and protecting forest resources through sound development initiatives
- identifying opportunities for economic diversification and giving value to forests through alternative uses (e.g., rural tourism)
- education, training, and capacity development
- supporting forest research
- developing meaningful ways of measuring progress toward sustainable development (e.g., local level indicators on biodiversity)
- using the international network to exchange information, knowledge, and expertise in identifying, developing, and applying new technologies

CIDA Photo: Stephen Horner

Moving from theory to practice

The Model Forest process may look simple on paper, but, in reality, it's more complex. People require time, persuasion, and compelling reasons to modify strongly held beliefs and reconcile competing interests. That's why Model Forest partnerships begin with a long, often difficult, period of building trust and learning how to work together.

The Model Forest partners must learn about each other's needs and aspirations, not just economic, but social and cultural as well. They must learn to respect views, approaches, and traditions that they may not share. They must develop a common understanding of their local ecosystem and of what sustainable use will mean in real terms such as jobs, profits, and quality of life. Armed with these insights, they can make informed choices and understand the trade-offs needed to sustain both the partnership and the forest environment.

Around the world, Model Forests are providing an arena for addressing sustainable development issues in a systematic and deliberate way. Through experimentation and adaptive management, they are pointing out practical ways to dovetail economic, social, and environmental priorities, and to reinforce and repair the fabric of civil society. What's more, through the IMFN, they are sharing information and experience with each other and with forest companies, the forest research community, governments, development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and others. Around the world, policy makers in the public and private sectors are beginning to recognize that there is a lot to learn from Model Forests.

Canadian Model Forests

Canada currently has a network of 11 Model Forests covering over nine million hectares in all of Canada's major forest regions. Since the program began in 1992, the over 400 partners have initiated more than 1000 projects to help them find innovative solutions to sustainable forest management. Model Forest activities are as diverse as the backgrounds of the Model Forest partners and represent the multitude of values found in forests. Projects range from research, to education, to practical applications in the field.

A few examples include the Lake Abitibi Model Forest in northern Ontario where its industrial and other partners cooperatively developed a unique harvesting methodology to emulate natural processes and to reduce negative logging impacts. A number of local forest companies are presently using the system. The Ontario government has officially recognized it under its provincial silvicultural guidelines.

The Western Newfoundland Model Forest has undertaken numerous initiatives to resolve issues surrounding the endangered mammal, the Newfoundland pine marten. Based on the united position developed by the Model Forest, the Newfoundland government announced its intention to establish a reserve for the pine marten.

The Long Beach Model Forest, located in the coastal temperate rainforest of British Columbia, has focussed on local communities, recognizing that community involvement is a prerequisite to sustainability. A community internship initiative was developed to involve local people, including youth, to train and employ them as research and project apprentices. These positions have led to permanent placements for the area's residents.

Canada's Model Forests are demonstrating that the partnership approach does work and leads to better decisions on the use of forests and related resources.

"Knowledge is powerful only when it is shared."

Henry Lickers
Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF), Canada

Model Forests in Mexico

Mexico was the first international partner to join the IMFN. Since 1993, three Model Forests have been established covering nearly one million hectares.

The most recent Mexican venture is the Monarch Butterfly Model Forest in the state of Michoacan. More than 900 000 people live in this half-million hectare tract of temperate forest where the mountainous terrain is also the winter home for North America's colourful monarch butterflies.

Pressure from timber operations and land clearing for agriculture threatened the forest habitat to the point where the butterflies faced extinction. However, an economic diversification and forest management project launched in 1996 is taking some of the pressure off these forests.

Thanks to the spectacular annual butterfly migration, tourism has become an important source of income for the 22 communities that lie within the Model Forest and has created an incentive to adopt sustainable forest management practices.

CIDA Photo: Stephanie Colvey

Model Forests: already more than a drop in the bucket

Model Forests have become a reality around the world. Since the first Model Forests were established in Canada in 1991, Mexico, Russia, the United States, Japan, and Chile have joined the network. What's more, Argentina, China, Thailand, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia now have Model Forest projects ready to be launched. Other countries pursuing the concept include: Australia, Brazil, Paraguay, Cuba, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Vietnam, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

Already, Model Forests cover more than 12 million hectares. That's a tract of land approximately the size of Greece.

What have we learned so far?

After nearly a decade of experience, experts around the world are drawing some important conclusions about Model Forests:

- They are a low-cost, practical tool for economic diversification and productivity improvement that makes sustainable development practices possible.
- They are centres for applied management and policy research. What works in one Model Forest will often work in another.
- There are huge spin-off benefits from the learning process that lie at the heart of the Model Forest concept. Collaboration, consensus building, and community involvement not only build stronger economies and communities, but also are key factors in well-functioning, civil societies.

Networking is key

A Model Forest begins when people learn to think differently about the forest resource and about each other. People learn best about a new activity from those who have faced similar challenges and resolved similar problems.

That's the rationale behind the International Model Forest Network. It converts the collective experience and lessons learned from every Model Forest in the world into services that help new ventures to begin and existing ones to grow.

- Model Forests are **inclusive** and give traditionally marginalized groups, including poor and indigenous peoples, a voice in the decisions that affect their ways of life.
- They are viable in a wide range of social, political, and economic settings from North America, to the former Soviet Union, to developing nations in South America and Asia.

As development tools go, they are relatively inexpensive to establish and maintain. Most Model Forests begin with outside funding and with contributions from government and other partners. The Model Forest experience has shown that over time, as partnerships grow and demonstrate results, they attract increased levels of support and funding from other sources. In Chile, for example, the Model Forest partnership has leveraged its initial contributions from the Chilean government and the Canadian International Development Agency by over eight times. Leveraging resources is important to the success and sustainability of Model Forests.

All indicators point to Model Forests as highly effective tools for balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities, worldwide. Still, they remain one of the best kept secrets in the pursuit of the goals of sustainable development.

"Sustainable management of this new Model Forest is aimed at protecting an environment that provides sustenance not only to the Monarch Butterfly, but also to nearly a million people."

Julia Carabias
Federal Minister, Mexico

Thinking and acting – locally and globally

At the 1992 Earth Summit, Canada committed to internationalize the promising Model Forest Program, which it had launched as a domestic initiative one year earlier. By 1995, the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) was established to identify opportunities and offer hands-on assistance to establish Model Forest partnerships around the world.

Model Forests don't just happen by themselves. They involve complex relationships between people, communities, industries, governments, aid organizations, and other groups. Someone has to plant the initial seed, to inform and assist the various stakeholders, to play honest-broker, and to support the initial interactions among the potential partners. Finally, it is vital to share Model Forest experiences by putting partners and Model Forests in touch with each other, and with funding agencies, and others around the world.

Established to play this facilitating role, the IMFN Secretariat's achievements to date have surpassed all expectations.

From 1995 to 2000, with a small staff and an annual budget of less than US $1.3 million, the IMFN Secretariat was instrumental in creating seven new Model Forests in Russia, Mexico, Chile, and Japan. It also set the groundwork for a worldwide movement that now involves 15 nations.

As these developments attest, Canada's goal of demonstrating the potential of Model Forests to the world community has been achieved. This reality must now be reflected in the financing, organizing and staffing of the IMFN. It is time to build a world-scale organization with the resources needed to really make a difference in global forests and the global environment.

In 1999, Mr. Juan Carlos Collarte, a senior Chilean official, agreed to chair a Task Force to guide the IMFN through this vital transition. Task Force leaders are now engaging international development and environmental agencies, NGOs and foundations to explore options for creating a broad, multi-lateral consortium to finance this exciting initiative.

Model Forests come in all shapes and sizes

The massive Foothills Model Forest in Alberta covers some 2.75 million hectares. At the other end of the scale, Oregon's Cispus Model Forest involves 60 000 hectares.

Model Forests must be large enough to include a wide range of forest values and uses. The optimum size will depend on a host of technical, geographic, economic, demographic, environmental, and other factors. In some cases, a watershed area or other natural boundaries have been used to define the land base of the Model Forest.

Model Forests in Russia

The Russian Federation, which accounts for nearly one quarter of the world's forests, joined the IMFN in 1994.

Located in the boreal forest of Russia's far east, the 385 000 hectare Gassinski Model Forest (GMF) is home to a number of rare and endangered species including the Himalayan Bear and Siberian Tiger. Early achievements include setting aside forest land where a ban on harvesting protects the habitat of endangered species.

The main objectives of the GMF involve building an accurate ecological data base, preserving biodiversity, and integrating social, economic, and environmental factors into an overall development plan. Economic diversification is seen as a major factor in reconciling the interests of inhabitants, including indigenous peoples, with the needs of the forest. For the GMF, research, technology transfer, public education, and broad community involvement are the principal tools for achieving sustainable development.

Model Forests in Chile

The Bosque Modelo Chiloé is a success story in the making, which is garnering attention at home and abroad.

Chile's Model Forest program began in 1997 and quickly bore fruit when Bosque Modelo Chiloé was established on an island in Chile's southern archipelago. This 173 000 hectare tract includes private agricultural land, undeveloped stands of indigenous trees, and a national park. Represented on its partnership team are indigenous peoples, community leaders, the Catholic Church, and a number of NGOs. Its major objectives are to improve living conditions, conserve biodiversity, and promote the island's unique traditional culture.

The forests of Chiloé are threatened by the familiar forces of excessive timber harvesting and clearing land for agriculture. Even national park authorities were unable to protect forest land from tree poaching and other unauthorized uses. Although it has been in business for just three years, the Model Forest has begun to change this situation. Value-added activities such as rural tourism, charcoal production, basket weaving, wood carving, nut harvesting, and production of natural dyes already generate considerable income for local inhabitants and provide alternatives to indiscriminate uses of the forest. Next on the list is to develop lumber and furniture production from the native Canelo tree, considered to be a weed species.

Learning from others

"As partners in the IMFN, we found ourselves energized to work and share our knowledge and experiences on various issues common to many countries. We can learn from comparing systems; specifically, we can learn to challenge some of our basic assumptions."

Timothy Tolle
USDA Forest Services-Pacific Northwest Region, USA

CIDA Photo: Pat Morrow

Looking ahead: our vision for 2010

Model Forests are now a proven concept. Few initiatives have been so successful at engaging local communities and integrating rural economic diversification and social development strategies into an overall framework of sustainable land use. Model Forests offer an effective route toward sustainable development and reversing the decline of the global forest stock. Of course, to make a real difference, we have to replicate what we have already done, many times over. From experience, we know that our ability to meet this challenge will, in the end, come down to a question of determination and resources to make it happen.

We have learned a great deal from nearly a decade of experimentation. We know, for example, that it costs about US $0.8 million per year over a minimum three year period to launch a Model Forest in the developing world. Support for these costs has come from external donors, governments, and partners at the Model Forest level. Beyond the start–up period, annual funding requirements, particularly from outside donors, will often decline as the Model Forest moves toward self-sufficiency.

We know, too, from experience in Mexico, Russia, and Chile that launching a country's first Model Forest is an enormous challenge, but subsequent ventures are far less problematic. Finally, we know that the IMFN Secretariat has been instrumental in promoting the application of the Model Forest concept around the world. A stronger IMFN Secretariat would launch new ventures at a faster pace.

The IMFN has already laid much of the groundwork and infrastructure needed to take the Model Forest concept worldwide. Our vision for the year 2010 is to have **at least three successful Model Forests operating in each of the world's 15 major forest types and ultimately extend our network to nations on five continents.**

Making the vision a reality: capacity and leverage

To make this vision a reality, the IMFN will require additional resources to support building Model Forests in developing countries and to support network programs and services. It is estimated that network programs and services costs would be in the range of US $2.5 million to 3.5 million per year, depending upon the number of new Model Forests developed. This will enhance the IMFN's capacity to deliver essential technical and management support to new and existing Model Forests. These services will include:

- assistance in building effective local partnerships and capacity
- locating new sites and putting financing in place
- training local personnel in forestry, business management, and organizational development
- developing productivity improvement strategies
- economic diversitication and development
- familiarization tours, mentoring and twinning new start-ups with existing Model Forests
- technology transfer and dissemination
- evaluation and performance measurement
- sharing best practices and communicating results throughout the network
- promoting the Model Forest concept

"In this sea of international forestry activities, the Model Forest Program offers something unique: this process by which several partners can get together, develop strategies, test sustainable forest management practices and share the findings."

Anatoly Pisarenko
Deputy Chief, Russian Forest Service, Russia

An injection of new resources will also permit the IMFN to package its development services into tool kits and teach others how to use them. To accelerate the birth rate of Model Forests to an average of three per year over the next 10 years, countries around the world must acquire the resources and expertise that will help them develop Model Forests on their own.

As the IMFN increases its capacity to deliver services to new and existing ventures, it must also turn its attention and dedicate resources to marketing and promotion. It must sell governments, aid agencies, foundations, and NGOs around the world on the idea of Model Forests as a tool for SFM, economic diversification, community development, and environmental protection. Countries must see the merits of adding Model Forests to their existing forest programs, and the IMFN must have the resources and people who can assist in this process.

Others agree

The July 2000 meeting of the G-8 Foreign Ministers acknowledge the contribution to sustainable forest management being made by the IMFN.

Source: Conclusions of the G-8 Foreign Ministers Meeting, Miyazaki, Japan

A recent review by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) has indicated that its experiment with **demonstration areas** for sustainable tropical forest management has not met expectations. A recommendation has been tabled suggesting that other mechanisms such as Model Forests and the IMFN be considered as alternative approaches.

Source: ITTO

A chance to make a difference

Achieving the vision of bringing new Model Forests on-stream by 2010 will be an important first step in renewing the world's forests. But a crisis that has been a century in the making will not be solved in just 10 years.

However, by creating a large critical mass of positive experience in the forested nations of the world and by strengthening the networking capacity of the IMFN, we can lay the foundations for launching hundreds of Model Forests in ensuing decades. As Model Forests move from novel idea to mainstream concept in the eyes of governments, industry, development agencies, forestry schools, and other groups, they will make a substantial contribution to the well-being of forest-based communities and countries and to the global environment.

If the future is not something that we enter, but something that we build, a new and larger International Model Forest Network will certainly improve our chances of helping create a world where peoples, industries, governments, and others can coexist in forests on a sustainable basis.

Model Forests and the IMFN have the potential to make a solid contribution to the construction of a sustainable global future. All that's needed is the will to make it happen.

"The Chihuahua Model Forest offered the support we needed to organize ourselves and develop the community ecotourism project. We have learned how to share with others our respect for the forest. With its support, we can now take care of the forest and our people."

Maria Elena Quintero
Tarahumara leader of the Ejido Cusarare, Mexico

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